

Belgian News



GO BELGEN

March 30, Belgian Beer Cafe Eureka, Southbank, Melbourne. The Belgian Ice Hockey team lead by Johan Bollue, coaches, members of the Belgian Club Victoria,

Australian guests and the Victorian Honorary Consul Geoff Pollard and Gerard Uytterhaegen, Belgian Consul, after enjoying a reception by the Belgian Embassy to welcome the team to Australia, and to encourage their efforts to beat Australia for a

place in the First Division. The team represents Belgium's best ice hockey players and they are of world standard, on April 6 they play Australia for the place.

Photo: Georges Bernard

Belgian club briefs

At the time of going to press members of the Belgian Club were invited to meet the Belgian Ice Hockey team at the Eureka Belgian Beer cafe, this was a reception held by the Belgian Embassy on March 30. In attendance were members of the Belgian business community, and representatives of the Belgian Consulate and Belgian Embassy in Canberra, as well as the Ice Hockey team and representatives of the Australian Ice Hockey organisation.

Film night

Via Facebook Belgians in Melbourne site BCV members have been notified of a film night to see X Ben on Wednesday April 13 at the Nova Cinema, Lygon Street Carlton. By indications a good attendance will be held.

Brel night

Belgian singer Micheline Van Hautem will be bringing us her favourite Jacques Brel songs with a special cabaret performances at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Members of the Belgian Club will be attending the 8 pm session on Saturday April 2. See the Facebook Belgians in Melbourne site for details.

CARNAVAL IN MELBOURNE

Een paar weken terug kreeg een heel leuk carnavaalkaartje van het thuisfront met de tekst 'Carnavalscheck: zijn je hoed, zin, humeur en carnavaal kleding van de partij?! Goed zo, je bent er helemaal klaar voor!' Ik moest lachen toen ik het kaartje kreeg en terugdenken aan hoe er in Maastricht tijdens carnaval aan toe gaat. Hoogdagen zijn het daar; niet meer, en niet minder! Iedereen krijgt officieel vrij van het werk en er wordt 5 dagen lang op straat gedanst en gefeest, kou of geen kou!

Maar ja, voor het eerst in jaren ben ik niet in Maastricht. Ik ben in Melbourne; de andere kant van de wereld en het land waar carnaval een volledig onbekend begrip is. Dus toen ik hoorde dat de Nederlandse club in Melbourne wel een carnavaalfeestje organiseerde, kon ik dan ook niet anders dan daarheen gaan om het gemis van de Maastrichtse hoogdagen te verzachten, en om 2 van mijn

By Ruth Meex



Ruth Meex is from Maasmechelen in Flanders (near Maastricht), she studied health sciences and is now working as a post doctoral researcher at Monash University. She undertook her PhD at Maastricht university.

Australische vrienden/collega's in te wijden in carnaval! En mijn Aussie gezelschap vond het geweldig! Wat mezelf betreft



moet ik eerlijk zeggen dat ik er tot zojuist nog steeds niet uit was of het wel zo een goed idee was om hen mee te nemen; 'reputatie-gewijs' gezien, bedoel ik dan. Want alsof het nog niet erg genoeg was dat we op de trein (omwille van onze carnavaalpakjes) bedenkelijke blikken kregen van onze medepassagiers, denken mijn collega's nu op de koop toe dat carnavaalmuziek typisch Nederlandse muziek is, en dat de polonaise onze nationale dans is.

Maar ach... langs de andere kant... mijn reputatie is toch al geruime tijd naar de vaantjes dus wat maakt het dan nog uit, nietwaar?! Ik kan dus niet anders dan mijn collega's gelijk geven; het was inderdaad een leuk avondje! De eerlijkheid gebiedt me wel om te zeggen dat ik het typische Maastrichtse 'gesjans' op de muziek van de Limburge kleppers 'Beppie Kraft' en 'Rowen Heze' een beetje miste, maar gelukkig konden de bitterballen en zoete mayonaise dat leed met een verzachten. 'Carnaval in Melbourne?! Dat was dik OK!

BRUGES – FLEMISH BATTLES, ART AND CULTURE

By Georges Bernard

Described as a fairytale city, Bruges is a place where you can walk the streets and laneways and dream you are in the 13th Century. So magical is the atmosphere one's mind can be influenced by the city's ambiance. It is a truly preserved medieval place with cobblestone streets, canals, towers, churches, convents, *begijnhof*, city ports, and more than twenty museums loaded with art spanning a history over a eight hundred year period.

In 2000 the entire city centre of Bruges was World Heritage listed by the UNESCO, so important is this city of 118,000 to the world's history.

As one wanders through the laneways and streets you are visually captivated by the constant view of majestic medieval architecture.

Mingled into this scene is a large array of small businesses continuing the Flemish traditional crafts of chocolatiers, pastisierers, breweries and cafes, restaurants, jewellery enterprises and of course the lacemakers.

Bruges is well located and not very far from Amsterdam, Paris, London and Antwerp, well connected with tram, bus and rail, it is an inexpensive trip for those who use Belgian public transport.

A short stroll or tram ride from the central station and you are in the medieval city, depending on your time of visitation, Bruges will turn on the charm, in autumn it is reds, browns and yellow leaves in the canals whilst you slowly cruise along, in spring it is the blossoms and new light green growth, like vir-



gin springing into life from the old trees.

Indeed Bruges is a romantic city with its horse drawn carriages, its unique pottery shops and chocolate that melts into mouths like a . . . let your imagination think about that one.

My last visit to the Bruges' De Halve Maan Brewery where I ordered some wonderful beer and of course we also had chocolates (pralines), my partner could not resist the combination, however after a few *Straffe Hendrick* (9%) and *Brugse Zot* (7%) *balloonekese*, she and our Belgian friend had some difficulties getting out of their chairs, I laughed all the way to Antwerpen . . . she is Dutch and not a seasoned Belgian beer drinker like me. The visit did bring laughter and we had a fantastic day just strolling around with our mouths open looking at the great artworks.

There are many places to see but you should not miss the 13th century Belfry with its 367 step towers, statue of Pieter de Coninck and Jan Breydel leaders of the



Brugese Metten and Flemish folk heroes, who sparked the Flemish revolt against the French in 1302, and the subsequent Battle of the Golden Spurs . . . but that is another long story.

The Hallen are also worthy of visitation, as well as the Liberty of Bruges palace, with its baroque gabling and gilt and golden statues, still used as an administration office, as well as the Renaissancezaal (1530) and the gothic Stadhuis (1376) and its world famous *Gotische Zaal* a total piece of art with its murals and unbelievable tapestry, carvings and paintings.

My imagination of forbearers fighting on the battlefields in Flanders came upon me, it reminded me of the time I sat in a church in Kortrijk looking at these golden spurs, thinking about the battle for Flanders. This hall is truly magnificent a must to visit.

As a young boy I used to sit in church not listening to the priest but looking at the paintings, the Basilica of the Holy Blood, is one such place, where you can visualise the knights of the crusades, delivering the treas-

ures of Jerusalem. Thousands of people come to stroke a vial of Jesus's blood, brought back from Jerusalem by the crusaders in the 12th century.

It is an experience to see this, whether you believe it or not, it is visually and spiritually influential on all who enter this very old building, with steps worn from the millions who have made this pilgrimage

The many museums include paintings by Jan Van Eyck (1390-1444), Gerard David (1460-1523), Pieter Breughel de Jonghe (1554-1638), Pieter Pourbus (1524-1584), Hans Memlings and many other painters.

The 13th century *Onze Lievevrowekerk* with its high tower, it is reported that the only Michelangelo's statue outside of Italy is displayed here, it is the *Madonna and Child*, the church is full of 15th and 16th century art and includes the tombs of Karel de Stoute and daughter Mary of Burgundy.

Sint Sebastianbooschutters guild building commenced in 1573 is still standing, this guild goes back to the crusaders who defeated the muslims in Jerusalem

in 1099.

There is of course the 13th century *Begijnhof*, a stroll a round will impress you, as you can imagine the plight of the single women and the cultural and society pressures to join religious orders, but still they did have some security. This hof commenced in 1245 by the Gravin van Vlaanderen Margaretha van Constantinopel

There are fourteen UNESCO Heritage listed *begijnhofs* in Flanders and this includes Bruges'.

There is lots more to see in Bruges, with bike hire, mini bus tours, horse carriage rides, canal boats you can explore. The city is well set up for tourists with hostels, hotels and homestays in all variety of settings and costs. A day trip is not sufficient and it is recommended you stay for at least two days to explore. There is also a great selection of cuisine and the city even boasts a *friet* museum.

If you are visiting Belgium then Bruges is a must, after all it is not everywhere in the world you can walk the streets dreaming you are in the 13th century.

